
Title: just a book

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The sheep bray,
wind soft across
they and the old man.
He chewed on a bit O
grass, content he was
to lean back on one
frail arm, long legs
like branches now
of the damp log he sat
upon. His eyes
twinkled once a while,
the wind wagging a
tuft of his grey hair
to and fro 'cross his
brow. He stared out at
the sea, had been
staring for hours
nay a movement, save
that of his eyes.
Squatting here for
days he had, and
might be for many
more, eventually
noticing his hunger
and choosing to chew
some bread rather
than some dying grass
stalk, as always.
The old man didth not
jump when he heard
the voice, but his eyes
darted.

"Uncle Gremio!"
Twas the voice of
Fernwig, long dead
sister's son. "O ye be
here, I knew ye
would! Thank the
Great Serpents!"

"Aye," he croaked,
then swallowed.
Gremio pulled out a
flask of ale and
uncorked it.

"I knew ye
would be here!
Always watching the
wool grow!"

Gremio leaned forward and sipped. "I hath not noticed... be it time for..." He squinted. "Nay, boy, not time to be shorne." He hiccuped softly.

"But look! Hath thou not noticed?" The young man thumped his chest wildly.

Gremio turned his head slowly and looked the boy over. He was wearing the distinctive grey robe of the dead. Old Gremio then closed his eyes and let his chin drop to his chest. "Ye have the aura of a thing gone bad, boy. What hast thou done now?" Fernwig, Gremio remembered, long long ago, back in the times when children still existed, been always the same. Gremio remembered the boy all red in the face like mulberry, glowing with pride and o'r'evil, the blood of a neighbor's chicken soiling his hands and very soul itself. Gremio recalled those times well, though so many a year blended into another. Gremio's father died of old age! And children been born and grew. Strange times come now, and old Gremio be uncertain how many a year it hath been. Now no one be borne, no children, and no one really dies. Gremio thought at first this woudst be fine, back when Nystul didth initially explain it,

but he still doth not
understand it, and
doth not like what it
hath caused... to
people like his young
nephew. "...guild n't
a chance! But we doth
returned with more!
And they paid, uncle!
They doth paid the
price!" Gremio held
up a hand. So many
times he been storied
such as this, he doth
not wish to hear it
yet again. "Let
me askest thee
something, my boy."

Fernwig didth stop,
mouth still open, and
chest heaving with
the excitement of his
own tale.

"How many a time
hath thou died?
How many, boy?
Likely be as many as
our ancestors--"

"Haven't thine ears
been on ye head,
uncle?" Fernwig
cried, rolling his
eyes. "They come! I
needest thee to open a
gate to town! And I
needest gold to get
mineself reequipped!"

"Come? Who doth
come?" Gremio asked,
sitting up. Suddenly
the old shepherd
instinct madeth his
blood rise.

"The guild!"

"Boy, thou art
indeed a fool!" Gremio
said. His legs creaked
as if they be as
wooden as the log they
been so much a
part of, after so many
a day. "Ye may call it
all a game, but this be
me flock! And I shant
have ye playing ye
fool--disrepectful of
life--fool games
here!"

Fernwig stuttered
a moment. "I-I sorry
Uncle Gremio--but
I came, but er, I hath
but nowhere to go."

"Damn thee! Ye hath
no fear of death! Ye
should have walked as
one of the dead to
yonder towne!" Gremio
counted his sheep,
then leaned his crook
on the log. The old
man raised his arms,
then made intricate
yet invisble patterns
in the air before him.
"Vas Rel Por," he
whispered, and at once
there be a flash and a
blue shimmering
portal rose from the
earth. He hastily
grabbed his crook and
began herding his
flock through the
portal. "Ye best go
yerself," Gremio
hissed.

"I stay and help!"
Fernwig said. "You
fightest them
with magic!"

"Fight? With
magic? Bah!" Gremio
snorted, wielding his
crook like a scyth. As
if on some daemonic
cue, three figures,
upon horseback, rose
the crest of the hill.
Gremio gazed at them,
frozen a moment. He
had not seen such
auras in a very long
time, for these were
dread Lords, vile
murders,faces hidden
beneath polished plate
helms.

"Damn!" Gremio
said, feeling
his body tremble from
the force of magic.
His reflective spell
took the brunt of it,
and collapsed.
Insanely, Gremio

wondered how very
long it had been when
he had placed that
spell on himself. He
gripped his crook,
unsure whether to
drop it and cast
another reflective
spell or save the last
of his flock. He
brought the crook
down on the rump of a
sheep with such force
it may have snapped.
The beast brayed in
fear and ran for the
portal, just as it
snapped shut.

Fernwig rolled his
head back and
screeched, his
voice cracking.
Fingers outstretched
like a lich's, he reared
back once and charged
the three men, who
said not a word, save
those of magic. "Damn
thee!" Fernwig
screamed. "Damn thee
to the void,
scoundrels!" One
man's helm tilted
downward at
Fernwig. Saying not a
word, the man did
pull a halberd
from his back. He
swung it once in a
wide arc, smashing
Fernwig's skull.

The death-blow
never brings the pain,
say, of a simple
wound. Nay, the
death-blow is, in fact,
quite painless.

Fernwig twas
lying in the grass, and
the grass twas in him.

He slowly rose
upwards, and glanced
down at his corpse.
Hideous, he could not
even recognize his
own face. The three
horsemen, heard
Fernwig, travelling

away and down the
hill whence they
came. "They leave!"
Fernwig howled. He
turned, and saw the
body of his uncle
Gremio, small rivlets
of smoke rising from
it. "The sheep be
saved!" Fernwig
wailed. "Uncle?
Where be ye?
Through the portal,
aye!"

But Fernwig never
found his uncle, in
spirit nor flesh. And
as the years didth
pass, and he sat on
that log on that hill, he
oft wondered if the
Great Serpents had
heard his uncle's
gruff complaints that
death held no
meaning, that death
be nay really death at
all anymore, and if...
perhaps they had
granted that which
Gremio had really
wanted afterall, a
real death--perhaps
somewhere with
children. Fernwig
doth count the sheep,
now, and wonders if
he mightest find it one
day, too.